

(11) (A) No. 1,109,091

(45) ISSUED 810915

(52) CLASS 273-151

²
(51) INT. CL. A63B 59/02

(19) (CA) **CANADIAN PATENT** (12)

(54) INTEGRALLY MOLDED PLASTIC LACROSSE STICK HEAD

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(21) APPLICATION No. 283,730

(22) FILED 770729

(30) PRIORITY DATE U.S.A. (711,260) 760803
U.S.A. (798,933) 770520

No. OF CLAIMS 9

This invention relates in general to new and useful improvements in lacrosse sticks. More particularly, it relates to the construction of an all plastic double-wall synthetic lacrosse stick head including a pocket integrally molded with the walls of the head. A keeper strap to facilitate ball control can be positioned across the face of the head.

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Double-wall synthetic lacrosse sticks are described in Tucker et al, U.S. Patent No. 3,507,495. The introduction of double-wall synthetic lacrosse sticks as defined by the Tucker et al patent has greatly enhanced the popularity of the game of lacrosse with the game becoming more common in intramural and varsity sport programs of secondary schools and colleges. This increased popularity is due primarily to the improved feel, balance, and durability as well as uniformity and economy of manufacture of the double-wall synthetic sticks in comparison to the single-wall, wooden and handmade lacrosse sticks used since ancient times. The introduction of the meshed webbing construction for the pocket of the lacrosse stick described in Tucker et al, U.S. Patent No. 3,822,062 has further

20 simplified the fabrication of lacrosse sticks and permits greater latitude in modifications to individual play.

Although the above-noted construction of lacrosse sticks is highly satisfactory as determined by the substantially universal acceptance of these sticks, it was recognized that the weakest area of the head of the



lacrosse stick is that area surrounding or adjacent to holes in the walls of the head for attachment or formation of the web to or on the head. Although breakage of the head as a result of the weakness in the arm of hole formation is not substantial, in an effort to perfect or improve the stick design the double-wall lacrosse sticks were constructed or molded with tab means to wholly or in part eliminate the holes in the walls of the stick used to attach or form the web or pocket of the stick. The provision of the tab means eliminating the holes provided a stick having more uniform strength throughout the walls thereof; permitted more rapid attachment or formation of the web to or on the stick head; and, surprisingly, depending on the tab formation and location, imparted improved play characteristics.

The present invention is directed to still further improvements in the fabrication of lacrosse sticks and to improvements which are intended still further to increase the popularity of the game, thus permitting lacrosse programs in not only secondary school and college intramural and varsity sport programs, but in elementary school sport and gym or physical education programs.

By one aspect of this invention, a unitary head is provided for a lacrosse stick comprising a generally V-shaped plastic molded from frame comprising two side walls joined at a juncture and diverging therefrom and a transverse wall joining the ends of said side walls opposite of said juncture, and a plastic webbing integrally molded with said side walls and transverse wall of said frame to form a pocket between and within said side walls and transverse wall.

By another aspect of this invention, a unitary head is provided for a lacrosse stick comprising a generally V-shaped plastic molded frame comprising two side walls joined at a juncture and diverging therefrom; a transverse wall joining the ends of said side walls opposite of said juncture and stop means spaced from said juncture, and a plastic webbing integrally molded with said side walls, transverse wall, and stop means of said frame to

form a pocket between and within said side walls, transverse wall, and stop means.

10 By yet another aspect of this invention, a unitary head is provided for a lacrosse stick comprising a generally V-shaped plastic molded frame comprising two side walls joined at a juncture and diverging therefrom; a transverse wall joining the ends of said side walls opposite of said juncture, and pocket means between and within said side walls and transverse wall; and a keeper strap positioned across the face of the lacrosse stick constructed and arranged partially to enclose the pocket formed by the juncture, side walls, and pocket means.

By a variant, the juncture is constructed and arranged to removably receive a handle.

By another variant, the plastic is a polyurethane, especially where the head is made by injection molding.

By other variants, the head includes a keeper strap positioned across the face of the lacrosse stick constructed and arranged to partially enclose the pocket formed by the juncture, side walls, and webbing which is either attached by snaps, or is integrally molded with the unitary head.

20 According to one aspect of the present invention, an all plastic head for a lacrosse stick is formed by integrally molding the frame and pocket. The head comprises a generally V-shaped frame defined by two side walls joined at a juncture and diverging therefrom, a transverse wall joining the ends of the side walls opposite of the juncture, and a pocket integrally molded with the frame. A handle is secured to the head at the juncture of the side walls. The integrally molded head is advantageous in that -

1109091

- (a) it substantially completely eliminates holes in the walls for attachment of webbing or the like to form the pocket, thereby substantially eliminating possible weak areas;
- (b) the pocket being integrally formed, substantially eliminates the need, and thus the time required, to fabricate a pocket by attaching string or mesh; and
- (c) cost of manufacture is reduced in that the entire head is molded in one continuous operation.

10 Surprisingly, play characteristics are not detrimentally affected and, in fact, the unitary stick permits a high degree of flexibility of play.

More specifically, modification to play characteristics is obtained not only by the size or depth of the pocket, also capable of accomplishment with string and mesh, but by modification of the synthetic plastic used in fabricating the head. By changing the polymeric material, the properties of the head can be adjusted in weight and from varying degrees of rigidity to varying degrees of flexibility which, in turn, affects the play characteristics and, more importantly, permits a wider latitude of play conditions and surface areas. Usually the more rigid heads are best chosen for play under normal field lacrosse conditions. Flexible heads, on the
20 other hand, are more suitable for indoor areas, i.e., in gymnasiums, and are preferred for play with younger players where injury by being struck with a stick is more of a danger. The integral molding permits fabrication of sticks which are very light in weight, but still possess a high degree of, and the necessary, strength. Flexibility of play, permitting play by inexperienced players including the young player, is further enhanced by the inclusion of a keeper strap across the open face of the plastic

head in the vicinity of the juncture. The keeper strap helps in the control of the ball building confidence in the player.

Because of the varying physical properties, including lightness, and also the relative inexpensiveness of manufacture of the all plastic lacrosse stick head, the game of lacrosse and variations thereof can be greatly expanded. As noted hereinbefore, prior to the introduction of double-wall lacrosse sticks as disclosed in Tucker et al, U.S. Patent No. 3,507,495, the game of lacrosse was largely limited to varsity sport programs of select colleges. With the advent of the double-wall stick, the popularity of lacrosse increased tremendously and expanded into varsity and intramural sport programs of most colleges and a number of secondary schools. However, the game has still not gained acceptance in many secondary schools or in most elementary schools. It is believed this lack of acceptance has been largely due to the initial cost of the stick and replacement cost of broken sticks, as well as fear of injury to players as a result of being struck with a stick. As a result of aspects of the present invention, however, the cost of the stick is substantially reduced through integral molding of the head and safety of play on varying surfaces is assured due to the varying physical characteristics possible with the stick head. The unitary stick of aspects of the present invention permits the game of lacrosse, or a modification thereof, to be played in gym classes made up of even young children under indoor or outdoor conditions. The use of light, shatterproof, plastic heads not only substantially precludes possible injury, but substantially eliminates physical damage to indoor, hardwood, or the like playing areas. Accordingly, through broad aspects of this invention lacrosse is now available as a valuable tool to gym instructors in teaching coordination, dexterity, and motor skills in general.

The plastic or polymeric material which is to be used in accordance with the present invention is critical to the extent that it must have as physical properties strength, toughness, abrasion resistance, as well as the desired flexibility in the finished lacrosse stick. The materials highly preferred are urethane elastomers made from reactants which are normally blended in the liquid state and cast or injected into suitable molds where they are heated to produce the desired unitary lacrosse stick. These urethane elastomers are preferably derived from polyester and/or polyether glycols reacted with organic polyisocyanates and cured with low molecular weight polyols or polyamines. For example, cast elastomers based on poly(1,4-oxybutylene)glycol and toluene diisocyanate react to form pre-polymers containing isocyanate groups. The prepolymer is further cured with an organic diamine, e.g., 4,4'-methylene-bis-(2-chloroaniline) to provide the final article. Preferred urethane elastomers are those marketed under the E. I. duPont deNemours & Co. trademark SURLYN which are ionomer resins and particularly those suitable for injection molding e.g., SURLYN 1555 and 1560. Others are manufactured by duPont under the HYTREL trademark. Additionally, the polyurethane resins marketed by duPont under the trademark ADIPRENE are particularly suitable for cast molding in contradistinction to injection molding. These urethane elastomers produce molded stick heads having the essential strength, toughness, abrasion resistance, and flexibility essential for the sticks. More specifically, stick heads are obtained with the polymeric material having a hardness on the Shore Durometer ranging from 20D to 100D, and preferably from 50D to 77D; abrasion resistance based on the National Bureau of Standards Index of from 250 to 550, and

preferably from 300 to 500; impact resistance based on the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) D256-56, method A; notched Izod of from 7 to 22, and preferably from 10 to 20; and a resiliency (rebound Bashore) percentage of from 30 to 55, and preferably from 40 to 50 percent.

10 In addition to the excellent physical properties imparted to the integral stick heads by the urethane elastomer, the ability to utilize liquid casting techniques and/or injection molding depending upon the resin selected makes the urethanes particularly advantageous. In one preferred process a two-piece mold made from a solid impervious material, e.g., a solid urethane elastomer is filled through a fill hole in the mold with a liquid urethane elastomer, e.g., ADIPRENE L-315, a urethane elastomer marketed by duPont as a prepolymer based on poly(1,4-oxybutylene)glycol and toluene diisocyanate (100 parts) and 4,4'methylene-bis-(2-chloroaniline) (26 parts) after a thorough mixing and addition of pigment, if desired. The filling preferably is accomplished within a short period, for example 15 to 20 seconds, to avoid undue viscosity build-up. The mold is then moved into a heating chamber and held at 100° C. for 15 to 20 minutes. During this period the liquid urethane components gel into a rubbery solid having sufficient tenacity and flexibility that the stick being molded can be demolded easily before the polymer has attained its maximum hardness. In this manner not only is the demolding facilitated, but the molding cycle is shortened which enables greater and more efficient use of the molds. Thereafter the article is further cured at 100° C. for two to three hours to ensure complete cure and optimum properties. As will be apparent to one skilled in the molding art, the temperatures are not critical and depend to a large extent

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upon the particular polymers used.

In an alternative preferred process, the integrally formed lacrosse stick head is formed by injection molding a suitable resin into a mold using conventional injection molding techniques.

Although the urethane polymers are preferred, it is possible to use other polymers including polyethylene and polypropylene resins, or a combination of resins. The essential feature is to obtain the necessary strength, abrasion resistance, hardness, and flexibility as noted hereinbefore.

10 In the drawing, where like parts of the various embodiments are designated by like numerals,

FIGURE 1 is a view from the open face of a lacrosse stick according to one aspect of this invention showing the handle partly broken away;

FIGURE 2 is a side view of the integrally molded head only;

FIGURE 3 is a sectional view taken along line 3-3 of FIGURE 1;

FIGURE 4 is a top, rear view of a second embodiment of the lacrosse stick according to another aspect of this invention;

20 FIGURE 5 is a top view of the stick of FIGURE 1, including a keeper strap used in another aspect of this invention;

FIGURE 6 is a fragmented view of the stick of FIGURE 1 showing a second embodiment of the keeper strap used in another aspect of this invention;

FIGURE 7 is a fragmented view of the stick of FIGURE 4 showing still another embodiment of the keeper strap used in another aspect of this invention; and

30 FIGURE 8 is a view from the open face of a lacrosse stick of the design shown in U.S. Patent No. 3,822,062 illustrating the use of a keeper strap.

1109091

Referring to the various views, head 10 comprises side walls 12 and 14 joined at juncture 16 and a transverse wall 18 connecting the side walls at the end opposite of the juncture. In the design shown, stop means

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20 is spaced from juncture 16 toward transverse wall 18. A plastic webbing or mesh 22 is integrally molded with and connected to the side and transverse walls and to stop means 20 to form a pocket to, in cooperation with the side walls, transverse wall, and stop means, receive and hold a ball and to control the throwing of the ball. The drawing which is on substantially a 0.5 to 1 scale establishes a preferred ratio and depth of pocket. However, modification can be made and good play characteristics still obtainable. For example, for indoor play it may be desirable to use a ball larger than the normal lacrosse ball. Such balls may be of a flexible polyurethane or like material, or hollow plastic. In such expediency it may be desired to vary the depth of the pocket, or the like.

It is believed the ability to integrally mold the entire stick head to provide the requisite properties, while obtaining good play characteristics, is due to having stop means 20 forward of juncture 16, and integrally and fixedly molding the stop means with the webbing or mesh in the formation of the pocket. This feature provides the essential properties and permits the adequate control of the pocket means to permit accurate and uninhibited play.

FIGURES 5 - 7 illustrates the lacrosse stick head of one aspect of the present invention showing keeper strap 30 positioned across the face of the lacrosse stick. As shown in FIGURE 5, the keeper strap contains snap buttons 32 on each extreme end of the strap. One end of the strap is passed through webbing 22 around one of the first side walls, across the face of the stick head, around the second of the side walls, and attached at the second end to webbing 22. The keeper strap is so positioned as to protect and partially cover the pocket of the stick head formed by the juncture, stop,

side walls, and webbing. Some latitude can be exercised in positioning the keeper strap depending upon the preference of the individual player. Preferably, however, the keeper strap will be positioned substantially as shown in FIGURE 5. FIGURE 6 illustrates a second embodiment as to the manner of attaching the keeper strap. FIGURE 7 illustrates still a further embodiment of the keeper strap. According to the embodiment of FIGURE 7, a tab 36 is integrally molded on each side wall of the integrally molded plastic head. Tab 36 has a lip 36a. A plastic strap 30 having an opening is snapped onto tab 36, engaging lip 36a, and stretched across the face of the stick head and snapped in place on the opposite side wall. It is possible according to this embodiment to injection mold the keeper strap 30 along with the entire head of the lacrosse stick using a weakened break-away design.

It is also possible to integrally mold the keeper strap in place as part of the stick head during the injection molding. If such expediency is followed, the keeper strap will not be replaceable, but can be permanently removed if desired after the player using the stick acquires the essential skill and feels he no longer needs the keeper strap.

The preferred material of the strap if detachable is flexible vinyl. It can be desirable to have the strap adjustable to conform to balls of different size.

FIGURE 8 illustrates keeper strap 30 affixed to the head of a lacrosse stick of the double wall design shown in U.S. Patent Nos. 3,507,495 and 3,822,062. According to FIGURE 7, the pocket is not integrally molded with the double wall lacrosse stick, but is formed of mesh 38 attached after formation of the head portion. The keeper strap in this embodiment is useful to facilitate an inexperienced player accomplishing lacrosse skills.

1109091

The keeper strap has been found to contribute substantially to the control of the ball used in the lacrosse game, thereby building the confidence of the inexperienced or young player. As is apparent, however, in the event the player should decide that the keeper strap is not desirable it can be readily removed. In the case of its being integrally molded, it can be cut from the stick head using a knife or other suitable tool.

10 It will be apparent that various modifications can be made in the inventive concept expressed herein. A particularly advantageous feature is having the juncture and stop means cooperate to receive and hold in place a removable handle which may be of wood, plastic, or a light metal e.g., aluminum. However, it is possible to integrally mold the handle and head in one operation. Moreover, as will be apparent, the dimensions of the side and transverse walls as well as the stop means can be varied to meet particular applications.

1109091

THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE
PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:

1. A unitary head for a lacrosse stick comprising a generally V-shaped plastic molded frame comprising two side walls joined at a juncture and diverging therefrom and a transverse wall joining the ends of said side walls opposite of said juncture, and a plastic webbing integrally molded with said side walls and transverse wall of said frame to form a pocket between and within said side walls and transverse wall.
2. A unitary head for a lacrosse stick comprising a generally V-shaped plastic molded frame comprising two side walls joined at a juncture and diverging therefrom; a transverse wall joining the ends of said side walls opposite of said juncture and stop means spaced from said juncture, and a plastic webbing integrally molded with said side walls, transverse wall, and stop means of said frame to form a pocket between and within said side walls, transverse wall, and stop means.
3. The unitary head of claims 1 or 2 wherein the juncture is constructed and arranged to removably receive a handle.
4. The unitary head of claims 1 or 2 wherein the plastic is a polyurethane.
5. The unitary head of claims 1 or 2 wherein the plastic is a polyurethane and wherein the head is made by injection molding.

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6. The unitary head of claims 1 or 2 including a keeper strap positioned across the face of the lacrosse stick constructed and arranged to partially enclose the pocket formed by the juncture, side walls, and webbing.

7. The unitary head of claims 1 or 2 including a keeper strap positioned across the face of the lacrosse stick constructed and arranged to partially enclose the pocket formed by the juncture, side walls, and webbing, and wherein the keeper strap is attached by snaps.

8. The unitary head of claims 1 or 2 including a keeper strap positioned across the face of the lacrosse stick constructed and arranged to partially enclose the pocket formed by the juncture, side walls, and webbing, and wherein the keeper strap is integrally molded with the unitary head.

9. The unitary head of claims 1 or 2 including a keeper strap positioned across the face of the lacrosse stick constructed and arranged to partially enclose the pocket formed by the juncture, side walls, stop means, and webbing.



1109091

4-1

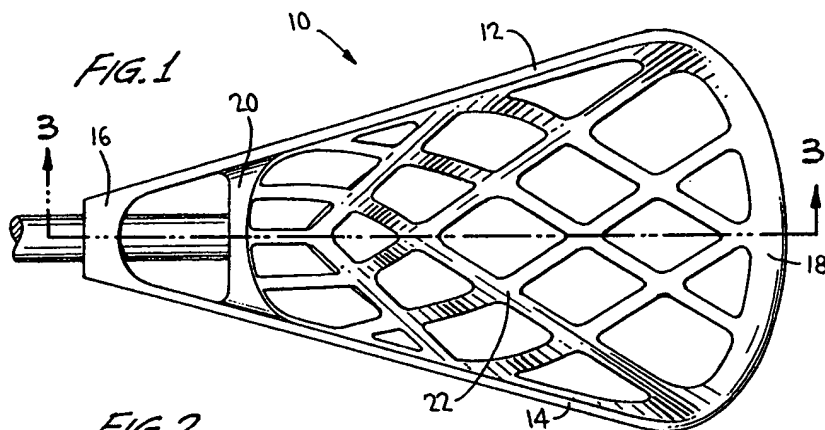


FIG. 2

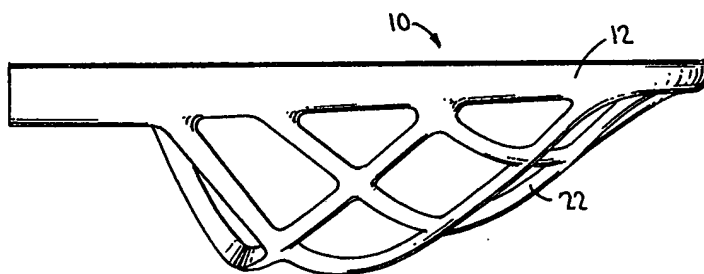
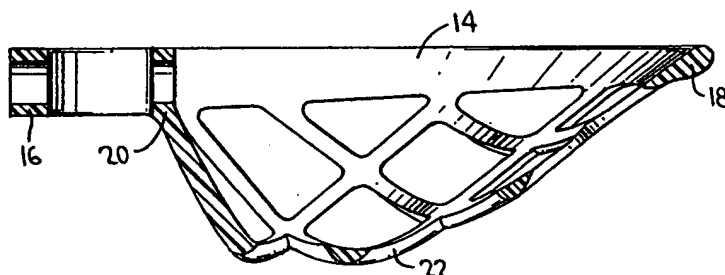


FIG. 3



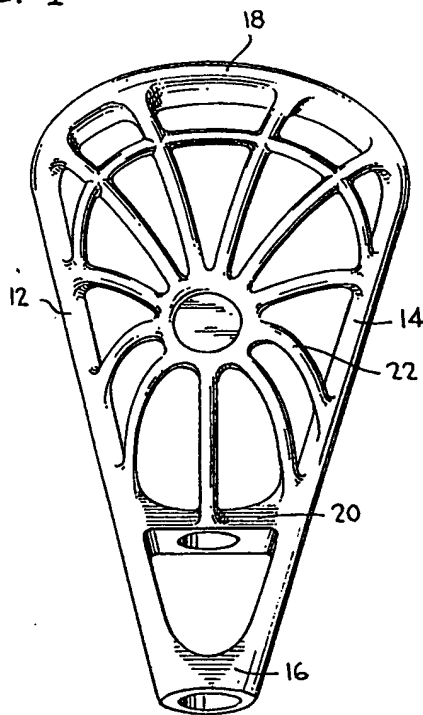
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4-2

FIG. 4

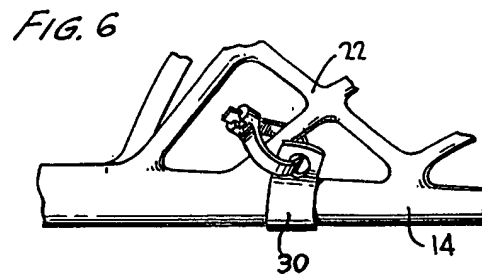
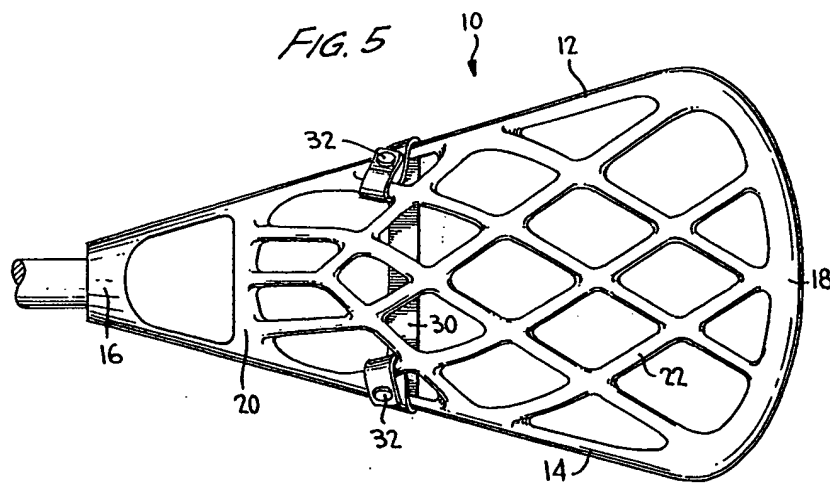


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4-3



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4-4

FIG. 7

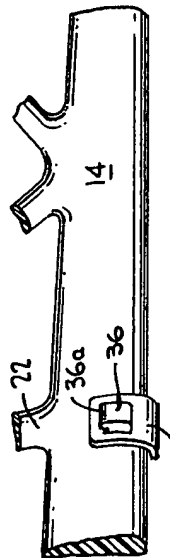
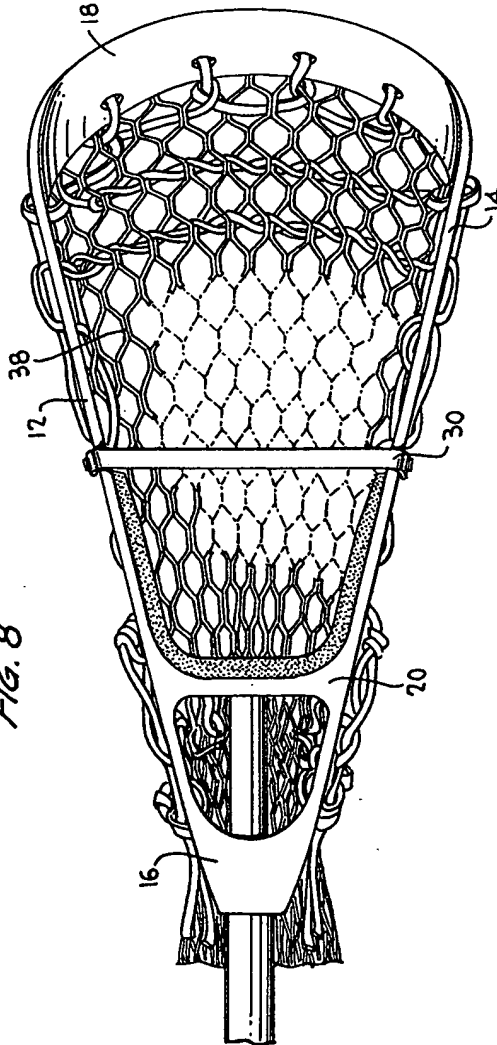


FIG. 8



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